

# The effects of pediatric critical illness on absenteeism

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Children who survive critical illness and their parents commonly experience physical, emotional, and cognitive conditions as a result of the critical illness. These effects can also include prolonged absences from school and/or work. What has not been fully understood is the rate and duration of school absences among these children and work absences among their caregivers.

A secondary analysis of a randomized trial of [pediatric patients](#) hospitalized for [acute respiratory failure](#) has shed important light on the subject. The study found that nearly 70% of pediatric patients missed an average of two five-day school weeks post hospital discharge and half of their primary caregivers missed an average of eight workdays post hospital discharge. The findings suggest a risk for negative downstream educational, financial, and [health outcomes](#) for patients and added stress and financial risk for their parents.

"This study suggests that post-PICU school absenteeism is an important target for future interventions including understanding the barriers to school participation, development of interventions to mitigate absenteeism, and to help children catch up on missed [school](#)," says Martha A.Q. Curley, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Professor of Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing) and the senior researcher of the study. "In addition, given the magnitude of missed work found in our study and the hardships described by parents in prior studies, there is a great need for programs and policies to support families during and after pediatric hospitalization."

The results of the study have been published in *JAMA Network Open*.

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**More information:** Erin F. Carlton et al, School and Work Absences After Critical Care Hospitalization for Pediatric Acute Respiratory Failure, *JAMA Network Open* (2021). [DOI:](#)

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